2: Morris T-5 (1937)1938 AK5 Lepcha AK5

sickness or misfortune befell, therefore deemed it requisite to propitiate them, which they did by offerings of rice, etc. The first fruits of the season were always offered to the Good Spirit. I may state that the purity of their belief was, at a period antecedent to our arrival, somewhat perverted by the introduction from Tibet of the Buddist religion; it has, and still has, however, but little hold on them. . . .

"The British Government has again conferred on the Sikkim ruler an annual and larger allowance, to be enjoyed as long as order is maintained in his dominions. Since then the country has become more tranquil and, as far as the snows (but no farther), is again thrown open to visitors. Sikkim, however, is fast deteriorating. The influx of the Bhutias has increased, and the power of the Buddhists has become firmly established; the Gurkhas have also commenced to settle in it, and the grandest and most glorious scenery in the world is becoming completely destroyed. With the destruction of the forests in Sikkim, the charm of the country will pass away, the climate will change, and unless speedy measures be taken to prevent it, the Lepchas will pine, and in time cease to exist. Much more might be said, but enough has been represented to account for the deplorable fall of the Lepchas.

"Of the language I cannot speak too highly. The simple and primitive state in which the Lepchas lived is admirably shown. It has no primary words (beyond the words for gold and silver) to express money, merchants or merchandise, fairs or markets. Their peaceful and gentle character is evinced by their numerous terms of tenderness and compassion, and by the fact that not one word of abuse exists in their language. . . . Of all the almost inconceivable diversity of trees with which the hills are covered; of all the almost incalculable variety of plants and flowers with which the forests are filled; the Lepchas can tell you the names of all, they can distinguish at a glance the difference in the species of each genus of plants, which would require the skill of a practised botanist to perceive; and this information

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and nomenclature extend to beasts, birds, to insects, and to everything around them, animate and inanimate. The trees and the flowers, and the birds, and the insects have heretofore been their friends and companions. But now, this simple knowledge, this beautiful language, this once happy people are fast dying out. The Lepchas have left their woods and innocence and have fallen into sin and misery, and is there no one that will help them, no one that will save them?" MAINWARING. 1876.

But the forest is still there: the good Colonel forgot the effects of that 137 inches of rain a year!

The Secretary of State for India, when Governor of Bengal, visits the Lepchas.

"We were entering a country reserved for the Lepchas, a stumpy, flat-faced people with sallow complexions and matted black hair, just such gnomes as one would look for in the sombre depths of an enchanted forest. And their impersonation of the part was perfect when, as not infrequently happened, they emerged unexpectedly from the forest armed with bows and arrows. And as if this was not enough, the attendants thoughtfully detailed by His Highness the Maharaja to accompany us, were garbed in a manner one would look for in no one but a woodland elf."

THE EARL OF RONALDSHAY
(now Marquess of Zetland), 1923.

A modern opinion by one who has worked among the Lepchas for fifty years.

"You ask me what I think of the Lepchas as compared with the other hill peoples—the Tibetans and the Nepalese. As I have told you, they appeal to me more than do the others. I'll give you a few instances of individuals and groups. I am, of course, conscious that one is apt to be prejudiced in favour of people we personally like, and to forget that among all races there are outstanding individuals who are exceptions to the general rule; but I'll do my best to be judicious.